



MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held Wednesday, March 18, 2002, for the purpose of meeting with members of the Greenbelt clergy.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:08 p.m. It was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, Alan Turnbull, Thomas X. White, and Mayor Judith F. Davis. Mr. Putens left at about 8:30 p.m.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: David E. Moran, Assistant to the City Manager, and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Rev. Renée Mackey, Berwyn Presbyterian Church, Berwyn Heights; Mary Linstrom, Catholic Community of Greenbelt; Jim Fischer, James Sturdivant, and Craig Chiolno, Baha'i Community; Rev. Daniel R. Hamlin, Greenbelt Community Church; Rabbi Jonathan Cohen, Mishkan Torah Synagogue; Rev. DaeHwa Park, Mowatt Memorial United Methodist Church; Jaco ten Hove, Paint Branch Unitarian Universalist Church, Adelphi; Rev. Michael Hopkins, St. George's Episcopal Church, Glenn Dale; Robert J. Lewis, Northern Chesapeake Unitarian Universalist Church, Fallston; Janet Parker and Kevin Hammett, Community Relations Advisory Board; Judy Bell, Greenbelt News Review; Amy Boyes, the Gazette.

Following introductions, Mayor Davis thanked the group for their response to the tragedies of September 11, 2001, and for the support offered to the community. She also mentioned the programs on peace and non-violence sponsored by the City last October and said it was Council's hope that Peace Month would continue and that the faith-based organizations would be involved. She then asked for any issues the group would like to bring up.

Roosevelt Center Benches and Zipcar: Mr. Lewis said he would first like to offer congratulations to Council on two recent actions it had taken in moving the benches across from Roosevelt Center and initiating the Zipcar program. Mayor Davis and Mr. Moran provided some additional information on Zipcar.

Anniversary of September 11 / Peace Month: Rev. Hamlin brought a suggestion to Council from the Greenbelt Interfaith Leadership Association (GILA) that GILA or the City might wish to mark the one-year anniversary of '9-11." Their thinking is that the emphasis would be placed on religious diversity and tolerance and on celebration of the heroism and generosity displayed by people, in official and unofficial capacities, during and after the events. Council agreed this was an excellent idea, and Mayor Davis suggested holding an event at Greenbelt Lake again, since everyone found that setting to be so effective for last year's gathering. In subsequent discussion with Kevin Hammett, chair of the Community Relations Advisory Board, and Barbara Luther,

Eleanor Roosevelt High School's Character Education Program, the idea was born to run Peace Month this year from September 11 to October 11, using the anniversary and Eleanor Roosevelt's birthday as the anchoring events.

Roosevelt Center/Activities for Youth: Rev. Hamlin said this was another subject GILA had discussed. He said although there are some real problems, there is also an issue with "the perception of problems." He said there have always been young people who hang out at the Center but that the community response was different when everyone knew not only who the young people were but also who their parents were.

Mr. Sturdivant noted that programs like Midnight Basketball, which make facilities and meeting space available to teenagers till very late at night, have been successful, as has the all-night Eleanor Roosevelt High School Grad Night. He suggested soliciting suggestions from young people about what might work, in order to give them a sense of ownership. Noting that the Aquatic & Fitness Center has already begun holding late events for teens, Mayor Davis said that Council hopes to elicit suggestions from young people at the upcoming Open Forum to be sponsored by the Youth Advisory Committee (Saturday, May 4).

Rev. Park said his church has been discussing the need for the local churches to make space available to young people. He said Mowatt Memorial intends to do this eventually but is still trying to work out issues of how to manage supervision and what insurance and liability considerations need to be dealt with. Mr. Roberts suggested that the Recreation Department might be able to advise on some of these matters.

Ms. Parker commented that when the planning for the Community Center was being done, there was a great deal of discussion about activities for young people to be located there. She wondered if there had ever been follow-up on any of these.

With regard to programs currently being run for youth by faith-based organizations, Rev. Hamlin and Rabbi Cohen both said the demographics are such that they have few members with teenagers and thus are experiencing a "valley" in terms of youth groups. They added that this is common to many churches in Greenbelt right now. Mr. ten Hove recommended to Council a presentation that was given to GILA by Rev. Jack VandenHengel of the Community Ministry of Prince George's County based upon the implications of the 2000 Census data for this area.

Responding both to the comments on demographics and also to Rev. Park's concerns about responsibility for programs and participants, Mayor Davis suggested the churches might join together and sponsor activities for young people on a round-robin basis that would enlarge their immediate groups but also allow for sharing the responsibilities.

Returning to Roosevelt Center, Rev. Hamlin said it should be kept in mind that although good ideas for programs will serve young people who are looking for something to do, not everyone wants to be reached. People who are there for the purpose of drinking and smoking dope are not likely to be enticed by other activities. Mr. Turnbull agreed with this but said he thought it was critical that programs and activities be available to children and youth at the critical times and critical ages when they do want them.

Ms. Linstrom asked if her perception was true that the young people at the Center were noisy, loud, and obscene, but not really hurting anyone. Mayor Davis responded that in general that was true, but there had been other specific incidents, and the numbers of people present and the use of foul language were often intimidating to others.

Community Programs and Resources: As the meeting was concluding, participants mentioned a number of programs and activities for others to be aware of. Mayor Davis described the NORC grant and the functions of the Community Resource Advocate, as well as the work of the GIVES program. She also thanked the group for their past participation in Labor Day events and asked for their continued support. Rev. Hamlin encouraged similar participation in Greenbelt New Year and announced that he is the new volunteer coordinator. Mr. White made a pitch for donations to the Emergency Assistance Fund. Subsequent discussion of this fund and the Good Samaritan Fund resulted in a request that more detailed information (e.g., how they are administered and funded, what the use of the funds has been for the past year) about both of these resources be sent to all the meeting participants.

Mr. Turnbull asked that the group feel free to include Council on their e-mail exchanges. He also suggested that people look into the Greenbelters' discussion group on Yahoo as a way of monitoring issues under discussion in the community. The discussion group can be accessed by selecting "Greenbelt eGroups" at <http://www.Greenbelt.com> or by going directly to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/greenbelters>.

It was noted by GILA members that there is a Hindu temple in the area with Greenbelt members, which should be invited to this meeting when it is next held. The closest Moslem mosques, however, say they do not have Greenbelt representation.

Other Business

The Mayor noted that the State Highway Administration has begun some sidewalk work on Greenbelt Road. She said the word at a meeting on the MagLev she attended was that the middle route would probably be abandoned, but she gave Mr. Moran information if the City wishes to write prior to the April 5 deadline. Mr. Moran said he, Mayor Davis, Brian Butler, and Joe McNeal would attend the bond bill hearing on Wednesday. Mayor Davis asked that the land preservation issue included in last week's Various Items be listed for work session scheduling.

The meeting ended at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk